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Authorial presence in L1 and L2 novice writing: Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspectives

Abstract

This study involved a corpus-based textual analysis of authorial presence markers in the argumentative essays of Turkish and American students. Utilising Hyland's interactional metadiscourse model (2005a) as the analysis framework, it aimed to compare the features of stance in L1 and L2 essays by Turkish learners of English with those in essays by monolingual American students. Also, discourse-based interviews with ten students contributed to an understanding of the use of markers in their L1 and L2 writing. The results indicate that the use of authorial presence markers in English essays by Turkish students was more similar to the use of these markers in writing by novice native English-speaking students than to the use of markers in the Turkish students' own writing in Turkish. The textual and interview data are discussed in relation to writing instruction, L1 writing conventions, and the institutional context.

Keywords: authorial presence, stance, corpus-based, Turkish learners, argumentative essay.

1. Introduction

Academic writing is widely seen as an interactive practice between readers and writers; in which writers project their authority onto a given topic and engage in a dialogue with their readers. Metadiscourse is an umbrella term for “the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community” (Hyland, 2005a, p. 37).

Several taxonomies for metadiscourse have been developed over the last two decades (see Ädel, 2006; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993; Dafouz, 2003; Hyland, 2005a; Mauranen, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985). In the majority of these taxonomies, metadiscourse is divided into two main categories: textual metadiscourse, which refers to textual organisation, and interpersonal metadiscourse, which is concerned with how writers present themselves and their propositions, and how they engage with their readers. Hyland (2005a) points out that all metadiscourse categories are interpersonal since “metadiscourse expresses writer-reader interactions” (p. 41). Since writing is broadly recognised as a “social act” (Hyland, 2005a, p. 87), this study adopts Hyland’s interpersonal metadiscourse model (2005a), which can be further broken down into two dimensions: interactive and interactional. The interactive dimension refers to the organisation of discourse, which helps readers understand and interpret the text. The interactional dimension describes the presence of writers and their involvement with both content and readers.

Hyland’s interactional metadiscourse model (2005c) comprises two dimensions: stance and engagement. The stance dimension describes how writers present themselves and express their own views and judgments, and the engagement dimension refers to how writers address their readers and draw them into a dialogue (Hyland, 2005a). According to this model, stance can be realized via four resources: (1) self-mention (e.g. *I*), which concerns authorial presence through the use of first person pronouns; (2) boosters (e.g. *definitely*, *obvious*), which express writers’ involvement with the topic and certainty; (3) hedges (e.g. *possible*, *perhaps*), which tone down writers’ commitment, and (4) attitude markers (e.g. *unfortunately*, *interesting*), which reveal writers’ attitudes to the propositions. This study focuses on three of these four resources. Since hedges appear to be a more reader-oriented strategy than the other stance markers (Hyland, 2010; Myers, 1989), this study will focus on

self-mention, attitude markers, and boosters as markers of authorial presence. ‘Stance’ and ‘authorial presence’ will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

Researchers have described the markers that writers utilize to project themselves and their ideas in a text using different terminologies. Petch-Tyson (1998) terms the concept as ‘writer visibility’, explaining that it is manifested through self-mention, emphatics, evaluative modifiers, and references to situation of writing. ‘Authorial presence’ is used to describe the same concept in several studies (e.g. Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Tang & John, 1999); however, these studies only examined first person pronouns as the manifestation of authorial presence. The notion of ‘voice’ also relates to authorial presence and stance. Though stance contributes to the construction of voice (Thompson, 2012), voice is “the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires” (Matsuda, 2001, p. 40). As this definition suggests, voice is a difficult construct to measure because “what is measured is limited by what can be measured and by how ‘good writing’ is conceived in the first place” (Matsuda & Jeffrey, 2012, p. 162).

The use of markers indicating authorial presence contributes substantially to the success of a text. Such markers reveal the extent of writers’ certainty and credibility, as well as engaging readers in a dialogue (Ädel, 2006; Hyland, 2005a; Mauranen, 1993). Hyland (2005b) states, “increasingly, such interactional aspects are becoming recognized not simply as optional extras to be brushed up when students have gained control of other skills, but as central to argument” (p. 375). Thus, interactional metadiscourse is a crucial component of students’ writing. As Wingate (2012a) also observes, the development of writers’ position, as realized through expressions of denoting stance is a vital component of argumentation. For novice L2 writers, stance tends to be a complicated aspect to master, since some linguistic and sociocultural factors, such as L1 writing conventions, the institutional context and L2

proficiency, can all influence the way in which students represent themselves in writing (Connor, 1996; Greene, 1995). Such ‘interdiscursive hybridity’, which can be defined as a combination of Anglo-American and L1 rhetorical conventions, is generally apparent in non-native English writers’ texts (Mauranen, Pérez-Llantada, & Swales, 2010).

2. Previous studies

A considerable amount of research has been conducted into the use of stance markers in undergraduate students’ essays written in English (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Chen, 2010; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008; Hinkel, 2003, 2005; Li & Wharton, 2012; McCrostie, 2008; Tang & John, 1999; Vergaro, 2011; Wu, 2007). Some of these studies found that learners overused first person singular pronouns in their academic writing, a trait that could result from their lack of register awareness and the influence of spoken language (Ädel, 2006; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008; McCrostie, 2008; Petch-Tyson, 1998). It was also reported that novice L2 writers in an EFL context expressed greater certainty and commitment to propositions in comparison to L1 novice writers (Ädel, 2006; Author, 2010; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008; Hinkel, 2003, 2005; Hyland & Milton, 1997; Petch-Tyson, 1998). This trait could be attributable to L1 writing conventions operating at the same time as L2 conventions. Writing instruction and the local institutional context could also account for the perceived underuse of first person singular pronouns (Author, 2010; Hyland, 2002; Li & Wharton, 2012; Vergaro, 2011).

Relatively fewer studies have investigated Turkish undergraduates’ writing in the context of EFL (Algı, 2012; Author, 2010; Can, 2012). Some of these concluded that Turkish students wrote with greater certainty in their L1 essays than in their L2 essays (Algı, 2012; Author, 2010; Uysal, 2012). In a cross-cultural study, Can (2012) found that Turkish students used more frequent attitude markers in their English essays than American students did; however, these attitude markers were not as varied as those used by American students. This

could be due to Turkish students' limited vocabulary. In an ESL context, Uysal (2008) examined Turkish students' L1 and L2 texts, and concluded that their L2 rhetorical patterns reflected both "stereotyped English and Asian writing preferences" (p.194). In the current context, English-medium instruction (EMI) is increasing in higher education worldwide (Jenkins, 2013), with the result that many more students are learning to write academic texts in English. This requirement is particularly challenging especially for first-year students, who may not have the competence to project an authorial stance in L2 (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Li & Wharton, 2012). It is therefore worthwhile to examine undergraduate students' writing in English, and to contextualise these findings in relation to writing instruction, L1 writing conventions, and the institutional context, to ensure that research studies have greater pedagogical value.

There is some empirical support for the contention that the use of certain discoursal and textual features in academic writing is more closely associated with experience in academic writing rather than with the status of being a native speaker, since both native and non-native speakers of English learn the rhetorical conventions of academic writing (Mauranen, 2012; Römer, 2009). Several studies conducted in a study abroad context reported that when non-native groups have advanced proficiency in English, the textual features of their academic writing do not differ considerably from those in the writing of their native peers (Ädel & Römer, 2012; Römer, 2009). Nevertheless, there is limited knowledge specific to how Turkish students with advanced proficiency in English write essays, and how the use of metadiscourse markers in their L1 and L2 writing in an EMI context differs from that of novice native English-speaking writers of a similar novice status. Additionally, Gilquin and Paquot (2008) suggest a great need for learner corpus research to investigate both L1 and L2 writing by learners.

This study responds to the need for additional research in this area, by exploring the use of authorial presence markers in Turkish students' argumentative essays in English, and comparing them to samples from a corpus of native-speaker writing. In addition to L2 essays written by Turkish students, L1 texts from the same participants were also included in the investigation to gain insights into cross-linguistic differences. These three data sets were complemented by interviews intended to elicit Turkish students' opinions about the reasons for their writing preferences. This study addresses the following two research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the use of boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers in English essays written by Turkish students, Turkish essays written by the same Turkish students, and English essays written by monolingual American students?
2. What are Turkish students' opinions about their use of these metadiscourse markers in their academic writing?

3. Methodology

This section describes the essays and interviews as data collection methods. The analysis framework for the essays and interviews is also discussed.

3.1. Data Collection

3.1.1. Essays

Three sets of argumentative essays were analysed in this study, as shown in Table 1 below. The first set was obtained from the subcorpus of the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), which previous studies have used extensively as a reference corpus (e.g. Ädel, 2006; Flowerdew, 2010; Gilquin & Granger, 2011). The LOCNESS, a corpus of 324,304 words, contains both British and American students' argumentative and literary-mixed essays (Granger, 1993). We selected a set of argumentative essays written by monolingual American

university students on the same topic and then closely matched them with the essays collected from Turkish students.

Table 1
The size of the corpora

	Number of Essays	Word Count
English essays by Turkish students (ET)	48	16 663
Turkish essays by Turkish students (TT)	45	12 180
English essays by American students (Subcorpus of LOCNESS - EA)	40	15 011
Total	133	43 854

The second set of essays was collected from Turkish students, who had been freshmen in the Department of Foreign Language Education at an English-medium university in Turkey in 2012. The students also wrote argumentative essays in English on a shared topic. They had previously demonstrated advanced English proficiency by passing the university's English proficiency test with a good score, at least equivalent to an overall band of 6.5 in IELTS (Academic) with writing skills at 6.5 or above. The students were also allowed to submit an IELTS score (at least 6.5) or a TOEFL IBT score (at least 79). In their freshman year, they were required to take an Advanced Writing in English course; therefore, since the data for this study were collected at the end of the first semester, the students had already received some English writing instruction. The third set of essays on the same topic was written by the same Turkish participants in Turkish. A total of 45 out of the 48 Turkish students volunteered to write an argumentative essay in Turkish¹. The Turkish participants first wrote the essay in their L2 at the end of the first semester, and then wrote an essay on the same topic in their L1 at the beginning of the second semester. This order (L2 before L1) was followed because writing in L1 first might have facilitated translation and recollection of ideas expressed in the

¹ The Turkish participants in this study also took a course entitled 'Turkish for native speakers' in their first year at the university.

L2 task (Hirose, 2003; Roca de Larios, Marín, & Murphy, 2001). Counterbalancing the order of the tasks was not possible, since the students wrote the essays during regular class hours.

A corpus was created comprising the English essays written by the Turkish students, and the Turkish essays written by the same students, following the compilation guidelines issued by the LOCNESS. The task setting, time limit, topic, and non-use of secondary resources were kept the same for the essays written in English and those written in Turkish. Since the main subjects studied by American undergraduate students represented in the LOCNESS were unspecified (Granger, 1993), it was thought that the general essay topic would compensate for any differences in the academic backgrounds of the Turkish and American students. The students therefore received the same prompts for all three sets of essays, since writing topic can influence the use of metadiscourse markers (Dafouz, 2003; Hinkel, 2009; Thompson, 2001). The English prompt given to both the Turkish and American students was “Discuss the great inventions and discoveries of the 20th century and their impact on people’s lives (computer, television, etc.). You can focus on one invention.” When writing in Turkish, the Turkish students were asked to respond to the Turkish equivalent of the same prompt.

3.1.2. Interviews

In addition to textual analysis, interviews were undertaken to reveal the sociocultural context in which the essays were written (see Flowerdew, 2005). Using stimulated recall (retrospective) interviews, we explored the students’ use of authorial presence markers in L1 and L2 in relation to the sociocultural and institutional context. Prior to the interviews, the essays written in Turkish and English were returned to the students in order to help them recall what they had written. Discourse-based interviews were employed to assist the recall of students’ own use of authorial presence markers in their writing (see Odell, Goswami, & Harrington, 1983). This discourse-based interview format enabled us to focus on specific

examples from the text (Greene & Higgins, 1994). In this way, it was possible to elicit students' own accounts of why they had used specific markers in their essays, by employing in-depth semi-structured interviews. These allowed them to express their own opinions about metadiscoursal features, and explain the reasons behind their choice of features (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The semi-structured, discourse-based interviews were conducted with ten volunteer Turkish students, constituting approximately 20% of all Turkish participants. The interviews took place over two separate sessions (one each for the Turkish and English essays) within one week of completion of the writing tasks. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish to ensure that the students could fully express their own opinions. The authors then translated the Turkish interview transcripts into English for analysis.

3.2. Data Analysis

3.2.1. Analysis framework for the essays

As mentioned previously, in this study Hyland's interactional metadiscourse model (2005a) was used as a starting point for the textual analyses of stance. This study focused on the use of self-mention, boosters, and attitude markers.

Metadiscourse is a fuzzy concept associated with context. It is not possible to determine the exact boundaries of metadiscourse, because "no taxonomy or description will ever be able to do more than partially represent a fuzzy reality" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 58). For instance, although attitude markers principally have stance functions, McGrath and Kuteeva (2012) argued that such markers also help writers to engage their readers in a dialogue, thus forming a reader-oriented strategy; this is an example of the multifunctionality of attitude markers, which Hyland (2005a) acknowledged.

A corpus-based approach was adopted for analysis of self-mention, boosters and attitude markers, and the list of these metadiscoursal markers used in previous studies

(Hinkel, 2003, 2005; Hyland, 2005a; Petch-Tyson, 1998) was compiled and examined for this study (see the supplementary material for the list of the lexico-grammatical features investigated). For the Turkish essays, the Turkish equivalents of those metadiscourse markers were examined. We used AntConc, a freeware corpus analysis toolkit, (version 3.4.1) (Anthony, 2014) to retrieve and concordance the lexico-grammatical features, and the UAM CorpusTool (version 2.8) (O'Donnell, 2011), a freeware corpus annotation tool, to code the categories of metadiscourse markers. Although we drew on a pre-defined list of metadiscourse markers, we closely examined the co-text of each lexico-grammatical device to determine its function. For example, when the verb 'show', which was listed as a booster in the pre-defined list, was used in the sentence "many studies show that there are bad impacts of the internet..." (EA-3), it was coded as a booster. However, when used in the sentence "it is difficult to show pictures while talking about a topic, so PowerPoint slides..." (ET-7), it was not coded as a metadiscourse marker. After the authors had coded all the metadiscourse markers together, a different rater, a PhD candidate working in the field of English Language Education, coded 60% of the essays independently a second time. The inter-coder agreement was 87.2%. After the negotiation of any differences in coding, an inter-coder agreement rate of 96.6% was attained, and the remaining data were excluded from the analysis.

After completing the contextual analysis of the authorial presence markers, all the counts for each category were normalised to per 100 words of text. Due to the non-normal distribution and heterogeneity of variance in the data sets, we initially performed the Kruskal-Wallis one way analysis of variance ($\alpha = .05$), the non-parametric equivalent of the parametric one-way ANOVA, to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the frequency of these markers among the three corpora. A post-hoc analysis was performed using the Mann-Whitney U test, the non-parametric equivalent of the independent samples t-test, for pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment ($\alpha = .017$).

3.2.2. Interviews

The first author transcribed the interviews in NVivo 9, and analysed the transcripts thematically based on an open-coding approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the key themes and main points emerging from the interviews had been identified, the first author showed them to the interviewees, to ensure that the interpretations were a good reflection of what they had said. This process of member-checking was intended to lend credibility to the findings (Creswell, 2007).

4. Results and discussion

This section reports the overall findings and then moves on to compare and contrast each authorial presence marker across the three corpora.

4.1. *The use of authorial presence markers*

The results indicate that boosters were the most commonly used markers of authorial presence in all corpora. Attitude markers followed boosters in terms of frequency. First person pronouns were the least commonly used authorial presence markers. As shown in Figure 1 below, the L1 essays by Turkish students included far more stance markers than were present in their L2 essays and the American students' English essays in all the categories except first person singular pronouns. This finding contrasts with that of Uysal (2008), who revealed a close resemblance between Turkish and English essays by Turkish bilingual adults.

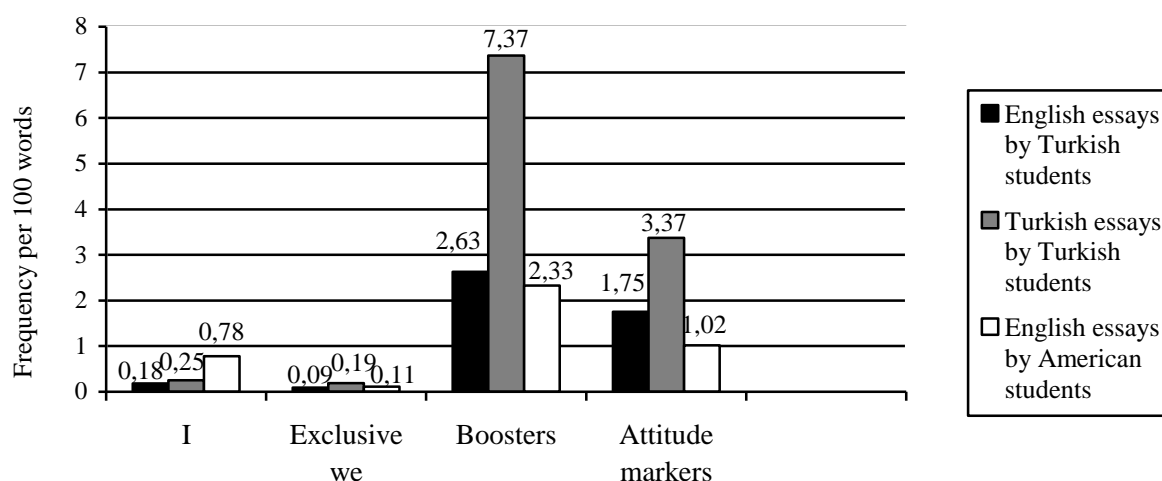


Fig. 1. Authorial presence markers

As evident in Figure 1, although the frequency of first person singular pronouns was greater in essays by American students, we found that Turkish students and American students had a somewhat similar authorial presence in their English essays. Hence, it could be argued that the Turkish students of English had developed, at least to some extent, register awareness of academic writing in English. This level of authorial presence may stem from the proficiency they gained through writing instruction in L2, as discussed in subsequent sections.

4.2. Self-mention

Self-mention refers to the use of first person pronouns, possessive adjectives and pronouns such as *I*, *my* and *mine*. Nonetheless, the analysis of self-mention in this study was limited to the use of *I*, and the exclusive *we*, since both pronouns seem to be the most obvious markers denoting self-mention (Hyland, 2002). Other first person possessive pronouns and adjectives occurred very infrequently in our data.

4.2.1. First person singular pronoun

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated significant differences between the three corpora in terms of the frequency of *I*, $\chi^2 (2, N = 133) = 17.362, p < .001, \eta^2 = .131$. The follow-up

Mann-Whitney U tests showed that American students used significantly more first person singular pronouns than Turkish students did in their English essays ($U = 574.5$, $z = -3.57$, $p < .001$, $r = -.38$), and their Turkish essays ($U = 555.5$, $z = -3.39$, $p = .001$, $r = -.36$). No significant difference in the use of first person singular pronouns was found between the English and Turkish essays written by Turkish students ($U = 1064.5$, $z = -.15$, $p = .875$, $r = -.01$).

A more detailed examination reveals that *I* was almost absent from the learner corpora. One student employed *I* 12 times in a single essay, but there was no instance of *I* in 35 out of the 48 in English essays written by Turkish students. This may indicate the heterogeneous nature of learner data (Gries, 2006). Below is an example of *I* from the learner corpus:

(1) To sum up even if *I* agree with some of the claims about mobile phones' bad effects partially... (ET-6)

The interview data provided additional insights into the Turkish students' avoidance of *I* in their English essays. All the interviewees spoke about their former instruction in L2 writing at high school, explaining that they were taught not to use *I* in academic writing. Student 7 (S7), for instance, said, "We are taught in this way. Essays are the texts where we do not use *I*, and we should form objective sentences."

When asked about the writing instruction they received at university, eight out of ten interviewees claimed to be unsure about the requirements concerning the use of *I* in academic writing, and thought that it belonged to more informal genres of writing. However, two students gave differing opinions. For instance, one student (S4) stated: "I sometimes use *I* in the conclusion paragraph of my essays to strengthen my argument." Meanwhile, four out of ten interviewees emphasised that the first person singular pronoun sounded too assertive. S9, for instance, said that students could not display authority through the use of *I*: "Since I am

just a student, when I write *I*, I know that my views will not be taken seriously.” This implies that the power relationship between students and instructors in the institutional context might have affected the learners’ tendency to eschew *I*. Hyland (2005c, p. 191) points out that authors’ “personality, confidence, experience and ideological preference” might influence their use of pronouns in writing. Given that these student writers had more or less the same experience of academic writing, their personality and confidence could also have informed their pronoun preferences. Tang and John (1999, p. 34) argue, “students feel insecure about the validity of their claims, seeing themselves to be at the lowest rungs of the academic ladder.”

In terms of their use of the first person singular pronouns, the Turkish students of English also differed from Swedish students of English, who made far greater use of the English *I* than was seen in the LOCNESS essays (Ädel, 2006). Interestingly, however, the limited use by Turkish students is similar to patterns reportedly found in essays by Chinese students of English (Hyland, 2002; Li & Wharton, 2012).

4.2.2. *Exclusive we*

The exclusive *we*, referring to the writer or writers, and perhaps to others, but excluding the reader, is another manifestation of authorial presence. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant variation among the three corpora in terms of the frequency of the exclusive *we*, $\chi^2(2, N = 133) = 3.038, p = .219, \eta^2 = .023$. The exclusive *we* was the least common marker in the data, and its frequency rate was too low to support any firm conclusions.

The example below suggests that the exclusive *we* was used instead of *I*:

(2) They have great impact on people. If *we* specifically discuss one item which is computer, we can clearly see the effect of it on people’s lives. (ET- 44)

Although the use of the exclusive *we* in our data was infrequent, half the interviewees said that *we* referred to *I* in their essays because their instructors had told them not to use *I*, and they avoided using *I* by employing *we*. S6 said, “*We* refers to me and other students like me. Hmm, I do not know. Maybe, it is just me.” This statement demonstrates the dynamic nature of identity in writing. In general, though, Turkish students’ avoidance of *I* seems to reflect their impression, based on earlier instruction, that academic writing should be impersonal.

4.3. Boosters

Boosters express writers’ certainty and commitment to the assertions they make in a text. They restrict alternative voices and communicate the strength of writer’s involvement. Conversely, they also suggest sharedness and group membership, since writers seem more likely to express certainty when the viewpoint expressed is believed to be acknowledged widely (Hyland, 2005a).

The Kruskal-Wallis test on boosters showed significant differences among the three corpora, $\chi^2(2, N = 133) = 87.833, p < .001, \eta^2 = .665$. The post-hoc Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the Turkish essays contained significantly more boosters than the English essays written by the same students ($U = 11, z = -8.21, p < .001, r = -.85$), and more than those written by the American students ($U = 12, z = -7.81, p < .001, r = -.77$). These findings correspond with those of previous studies (Algi 2012; Author, 2010; Uysal, 2012), which also found more boosters in Turkish essays than those in English essays written by the same Turkish students. Thus, the heavy use of boosters can be regarded as one of the characteristics of Turkish texts written by novice student writers. Moreover, the high frequency of boosters may be a rhetorical convention of Turkish. Uysal (2012) notes that boosters and overstatements are typical of Turkish essays, and explicit statements and assertions are valued

in Turkish writing classes. This is consistent with Hinkel's (2003) claim that the rhetorical traditions of many cultures, aside from Anglo-American ones, attach a high value to certainty. In this sense, the rhetoric of Turkish seems similar to that of Arabic, which favours assertions and overstatements (Uysal, 2012).

On the other hand, no significant difference was found between the English essays written by Turkish students and those by American students ($U = 759.5$, $z = -1.68$, $p = .093$, $r = -.17$). This finding is in contrast with previous studies, which reported abundant use of boosters in Chinese learners' English essays in an EFL context (Hyland & Milton, 1997; Li & Wharton, 2012).

In terms of the variety of boosters, there was little difference found between the two sets of English essays. American students used a total of 55 different boosters, whereas Turkish students used 52 different boosters in their English essays. This suggests that Turkish students with advanced proficiency in English are able to use a large variety of English boosters. The Turkish students in this study differed from the foreign language learners in Hinkel's study (2003), which revealed more use of boosters drawn from a limited lexical range. Unlike either set of English essays, the Turkish essays contained 76 different boosters, highlighting the overall frequency of boosters in the Turkish essays.

The examples below suggest that boosters play an important role in strengthening the argument put forward by the writers:

(1) The invention of mobile phones, for example, has *completely* changed our lives in terms of communication and safety. (ET-8)

(2) İlk önce iyi yönlerini ele alıp daha sonra da kötü etkilerinden bahsetmek konunun anlaşılması için faydalı *olacaktır*. (Dealing with the positive aspects and then

mentioning the negative effects of it *will certainly be* beneficial for understanding of the topic.) (TT-23)

(3) Mathematical models, theories, etc. are *absolutely* riddled with errors simply because there are many things people don't know or can't predict. (EA-1)

As shown in Table 2, among the top five boosters, *all*, *even*, and *very* were shared across the three corpora.

Table 2
Top five most frequent boosters

English essays by Turkish students			Turkish essays by Turkish students			English essays by American students		
Boosters	n	%	Boosters	n	%	Boosters	n	%
all	50	11.38	verbs followed by –Dir	375	41.75	all	48	13.71
even	47	10.70	birçok (a lot)	73	8.12	will	34	9.71
a lot	27	6.15	her (all)	67	7.46	very	23	6.57
cannot ²	25	5.69	çok (very)	63	7.01	even	21	6
very	25	5.69	bile (even)	20	2.22	have to	15	4.28
Total	174	39.61		598	66.56		141	40.27

The most obvious difference between the English top five and the Turkish top five lists is that Turkish verbs followed by the generalising modality marker *–Dir* comprised 42% of all the boosters in Turkish essays. Göksel and Kerslake (2011) note that *–Dir* is a formal construction connoting authoritativeness, which is used when statements of general and broad validity are made. Hence, *–Dir* was treated as a booster in this study when it expressed

² In the Turkish language, statements of assertions are realised through the Turkish translation equivalent of *cannot* (Göksel & Kerslake, 2011). In those instances, the students used *cannot* to express their claims in the English essays. This is likely to stem from L1 influence (Algı, 2012).

certainty, as was *olacaktır* in Example 2 above. Previous studies also point out that the suffix *-Dir* can express certainty or possibility (Sansa, 1986; Underhill, 1976). Underhill (1976) argues that *-Dir* conveys “the truth and definiteness of the statement” (p. 33). Our finding for *-Dir* is consistent with that of Alçı’s (2012), which found that verbs in combination with *-Dir* comprised a large proportion of boosters in her data set.

Another noticeable difference between boosters in English and Turkish emerged in the use of modals, as shown in Table 2. American students frequently used the two modal verbs *will* and *have to*, but these were absent from the top five present in Turkish students’ English essays. This might be partially explained by the writing instructions they received, since eight out of ten interviewees claimed to have been told to avoid the use of strong modals in English essays. For example, S4 said, “In English classes at the university, we are taught to take the other possible options into consideration and soften our claims instead of expressing certainty.” Similarly, S10 stated in relation to the use of fewer boosters in her English essay: “We are taught not to use a lot of boosters in English academic essays... We are taught to hedge our opinions.”

The only modal verb among the top five most frequently used boosters in the English essays written by Turkish students was *cannot*. However, as Alçı (2012) pointed out, the use of *cannot* seemed to be pragmatically inappropriate. As a possible result of L1 transfer, the Turkish students used the negative form of *can* to express impossibility, as in the example below:

(6) Furthermore; they get used to consume fast food while watching TV or playing computer games, which causes them fatter and fatter day by day. Moreover; they *cannot* learn the daily tasks and cope with the real life. (ET-33)

Regarding the extensive use of boosters in their Turkish essays, three major themes emerged from the students' interviews; these were: confidence in L1 writing, writing instruction in L1, and reading experiences in L1. S3 said, "I use a lot of boosters in my Turkish essays because I have a better command of the Turkish language than English." The main reasons they gave for the heavy use of boosters in their Turkish essays were to increase the persuasiveness and credibility of their arguments, and to emphasise the importance of their statements.

To recap, the results showed that boosters were heavily used in the Turkish essays, but no significant difference was found in the frequency of boosters between the English essays written by Turkish and American students.

4.4. Attitude markers

Attitude markers, originally classified as stance markers (Hyland, 2005a), express writers' feelings, attitudes, and value judgments. They also highlight certain passages of text and serve to engage readers with issues raised in the text (Hyland, 2010).

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences in the frequency of attitude markers among the three corpora, $\chi^2(2, N = 133) = 60.291, p < .001, \eta^2 = .45$. The post-hoc Mann-Whitney U test showed that the Turkish essays contained significantly more attitude markers than the English essays ($U = 398.5, z = -5.23, p < .001, r = -.54$), and those written by American students ($U = 110, z = -6.95, p < .001, r = -.75$). Additionally, the Turkish students employed significantly more attitude markers in their English essays than their American counterparts ($U = 475.5, z = -4.06, p < .001, r = -.43$). This findings is consistent with that of Can (2012), who reported that EFL students employed more attitude markers than American students.

The interviews suggest that confidence in L1 writing probably explains the extensive use of attitude markers in Turkish essays. In contrast, six out of ten interviewees expressed concern about correct usage when writing in English. For example, S7 said, “While I am writing in English, I am not sure whether a particular adverb or adjective fits the sentence. Therefore, I use them when I am absolutely sure. At all other times, I avoid using them.” Although those six students thought that they had avoided attitude markers in their essays, the Turkish students of this study still used significantly more attitude markers in their English essays than their American counterparts. The remaining four students interviewed expressed different viewpoints on the use of attitude markers. S1, for instance, stated: “When I am passionate about a topic, I also express my feelings in my essays. It has become a kind of habit.” Their extensive use of attitude markers might be attributed to developmental factors and/or cultural influence, since an adorned or elaborate language style is encouraged in Turkish writing classes (Uysal, 2012). It was found that Turkish students also added embellishments to their Turkish essays (Uysal, 2008, 2012).

Attitude markers connote writers’ evaluative and judgmental stance; the examples below indicate this:

(1) Even though, these inventions have numerous benefits for people, *unfortunately*, they do not supply always good results. (ET-22)

(2) Ancak, *maalesef*, cep telefonları insan hayatı üzerinde olumsuz etkiye de sahiptir. (However, *unfortunately*, mobile phones have also negative effects on human life.) (TT-23)

(3) The invention of the airplane has had many positive effects –, *unfortunately*, however, it was [*sic*] brought about some negative changes, also. (EA-12)

In addition to the frequency of attitude markers, their variety also offers some insights into students’ preferences. Unexpectedly, the number of different attitude markers employed

by American and Turkish students in their English essays was similar (47 and 46 respectively). This might indicate that the Turkish learners of English had arrived at a high level of lexical competence, enabling them to use a wide variety of attitude markers. This is in sharp contrast with the findings of Can (2012), who reported that the variety of attitude markers in Turkish students' English essays was far lower than that in American students' essays. Writing instruction in L2 could also explain the variety of attitude markers in the English essays by Turkish students. Half the interviewees said that they had been provided with lexical chunks and adverbs in their English classes. For instance, S9 explained, "In my English essays, I generally use the lexical chunks that we covered in the classes."

When frequently used attitude markers were investigated, we found that they were employed more in combination with boosters than with hedges. 31% of the attitude markers were preceded by boosters in the LOCNESS subcorpus, and this same combination represented 22% of the attitude markers employed in the English essays written by Turkish students. Likewise, in the subcorpus of LOCNESS, the occurrence of hedged attitude markers, at 2%, was less than the 6% found in the learner data. This difference suggests that American students could be more assertive in their use of attitude markers. Boosters followed by attitude markers tend to enhance evaluation of statements, as seen in the example below:

(4) The big impact of technological tools was a *really important* process for humankind. (ET-2)

Gillaerts and Van de Welde (2010) indicated that there is an increase in the use of attitude markers preceded by hedges in research article abstracts, but this observation differs from the findings of this study, which did not include many occurrences of hedged attitude markers. This may be explained by the novice status of both the native and non-native English-speaking students in academic writing (Wingate, 2012b).

As attitude markers express the writers' stance, they are also likely to evoke readers' feelings and interests, thus stimulating reader engagement (Hyland, 2005a; McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012). The following example suggests that attitude markers communicate the author's commitment to a certain proposition, engaging and stimulating the reader's interest.

(5) They can chat with other people and more *interestingly*, they can see them with the camera and can speak with them. (ET-2)

The interview data supported this functional use of attitude markers. Eight out of ten interviewees claimed to use attitude markers in order to attract readers' attention. S9 said, "When I say 'the most important' or 'importantly', I do it to draw the readers' attention. I also want them to regard it as important." In summary, attitude markers seem to be multifunctional, serving in some cases to both communicate stance and activate reader engagement.

5. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

This study investigated the use of authorial presence markers in English essays written by Turkish learners of English, Turkish essays written by the same group of Turkish students, and English essays written by monolingual American students. In the follow-up interviews, the ten Turkish students discussed how they felt about their use of these markers.

The study revealed that the Turkish essays include substantially more authorial presence markers than the English essays by either the Turkish and American students. The level of authorial presence manifested through these markers in the Turkish students' English essays is closer to the level exhibited in the essays of the native speakers of English than to the level of authorial presence found in their Turkish essays. This suggests that their writing instruction in L2 had taught them some of the rhetorical conventions concerning boosters and

attitude markers. The commonalities in the variety of boosters and attitude markers in both Turkish and American students' English essays indicate that both native and non-native novice student writers could be acquiring academic writing competence in similar ways. Furthermore, the analysis of the phraseology of attitude markers in this study suggests that both groups are novices in their use of metadiscoursal features.

When the Turkish students wrote in English, their use of first person singular pronouns was similar to their use of these pronouns in their Turkish essays. This finding might be attributable to their shared cultural backgrounds, including previous writing instruction discouraging the use of the pronoun *I* in academic writing. Thus, it can be said that Turkish students' writing in English is influenced by both cultural tendencies and by English language conventions. Such interdiscursive hybridity has been identified and discussed in the literature (Mauranen et al., 2010).

Based on the Turkish students' interview responses, they are largely conscious of their use of stance markers. However, their writing and interviews suggest that their use of the first person singular is constrained by the sense of a culturally conditioned power relationship in which they are 'just students'. It seems that metadiscourse in Turkish students' essays provides an indication of how students' writing is influenced by social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Hinkel, 2002; Uysal, 2012), as Hyland (2002, 2005b) found in his studies of Chinese students' texts. The interviews give substantial evidence that authorial presence, especially the use of first person pronouns is shaped by contextual factors, such as previous writing instruction and the expectations of instructors. This may suggest that specific discourse communities influence the presence of particular interactional metadiscourse features in student writing. As recorded in the student interviews, instructors' advice concerning the avoidance of first person singular pronouns and strong modal verbs may

contribute to the scarcity of these features in the Turkish students' English essays. The interviews also reveal a dynamic relationship between the writer's identity and his or her work. For example, three out of ten interviewees changed their opinions regarding the meaning of *we* in specific sentences during their interviews. Their willingness to revise their opinions suggests that interviews could have a role in teaching students to think critically about the rhetorical options available; that is, they could function as a tool to develop students' metacognitive awareness.

All the interviewees of this study considered academic writing objective and impersonal. The first instructional step, therefore, should be to help students understand that academic writing is a form of social interaction. Moreover, students' awareness of the cultural differences between L1 and L2 writing should be raised. They should be encouraged to build a critical awareness of rhetorically effective strategies and options. When students gain better mastery and understanding of their rhetorical resources, they are likely to feel more empowered to assert their authority as writers. This will then enable them to create arguments that are more effective and critical. There is a need for explicit and systematic teaching of interactional metadiscourse markers in English writing classes.

The interviews suggest that the participants had only a limited understanding of the role played by stance plays in the development of their arguments. More explicit instruction is needed to improve both native and non-native novice writers' understanding of argumentation in academic writing (Wingate, 2012a). In advanced writing classes, the reading and writing tasks that students have been assigned for other classes could be used in discussions to provide authentic examples of authorial presence in academic texts. Teachers can also be encouraged to compile a small corpus of student writing and expert writing for use in corpus-

based activities in the classroom. Students might then be asked to identify, examine and discuss the metadiscourse items present in a variety of texts.

6. Limitations and implications for further research

This study has several limitations. First, due to its small corpus and cross-sectional design, it is not possible to generalise the results to form a broader picture of the interlanguage use of stance markers in novice writing. An additional limitation is that the analysis of metadiscoursal features was limited to a corpus-based approach. A corpus-driven approach might have provided more detailed insights into other manifestations of authorial presence that would not have been captured by the corpus-based analysis. In addition, a more fine-grained phraseological analysis of metadiscoursal features would have given a more complete picture of the multifunctionality of metadiscourse. An analysis of monolingual Turkish students' essays might have yielded a more conclusive understanding of the cultural and developmental influences on bilingual Turkish students' L2 writing.

Longitudinal and developmental studies might enable researchers to monitor students' writing development, to determine how, and in what ways, their use of metadiscoursal features differ from or reflect those of native speakers over time. Lastly, we suggest that further research into Turkish EFL students' use of stance markers in the form of a longitudinal corpus-driven study with a larger corpus would be worthwhile.

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